

## *THE MIRROR OF NATURE*

*VINCENT OF BEAUVAIS*

### Chapter: An Apology Concerning the Nature of Things

[Author] No one, I believe, who is accustomed to read in the book of creatures — a book set before us to read — the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, the Creator, Governor, and Preserver of all, with truth illuminating their reason, will consider my description of the nature of things, which I have meticulously endeavored to provide, to be superfluous or useless. For, as the great Basil says, those who understand truth and reckon the invisible from the visible apprehend the most certain monuments of the Benefactor in the earth and in the air, in the waters and in the heavens, and in all that is perceived. Thus, with the Lord ever present to their senses, no time is given to sins, nor is any opportunity left for the enemy to suggest opposition.

Moreover, there is another utility here, by no means to be overlooked by teachers, preachers, and all expositors of the sacred scriptures. As Augustine states, "ignorance of things makes figurative expressions obscure," for instance, when we are unaware of the natures of animals, stones, herbs, or other things that are often used in scripture for the sake of some similitude. Likewise, ignorance of numbers prevents many mystically placed elements in them from being understood.

Indeed, how great is even the lowest beauty of this world, and how pleasing to the gaze of reason diligently considering not only the modes, numbers, and orders of things, which are most fittingly and orderly placed throughout the various parts of the world, but also the spans of time, which are continuously unfolded through their successions and distinguished by the death of those born. For my part, to pass over those pure in heart, whose property it is to see God and delight in Him — I, impure sinner that I am, whose mind, alas, still lies in the dregs of its flesh, enveloped in its filth — am nevertheless affected by a certain spiritual sweetness towards the Creator and Ruler of the world. For I pursue Him with greater veneration and reverence when I contemplate the magnitude and beauty of His creature, and its permanence. For the mind itself, often raising itself a little from the aforementioned dregs of thoughts and affections, and ascending into the light of contemplation as best it can, considers the magnitude of the whole world in a single glance, as if from some high place, containing within itself infinite places filled with diverse kinds of creatures. It also beholds the entire age of the world, namely from the beginning until now, with a certain

gaze; and there it comprehends all times, encompassing various successions of generations and changes of things, as if under a single line. And from there, at least by the intuition of faith, it ascends to contemplate in some way the magnitude, beauty, and perpetuity of the Creator Himself. For this world, by the spaciousness of its places, imitates, according to its measure, the immensity of the Creator. By the variety of its species, it imitates His beauty; by the prolixity of its times, His eternity. This temporal beauty, which is accomplished by the passing and succession of things, is embraced by historical narration, which is most fully described in this work from the beginning of the world to its end.

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## BOOK ONE

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### Chapter 1: On the Diverse Acceptations of the World

From the book called *Image of the World*, the making of the world is described in five ways. First, the world is called archetypal, that is, primal and the exemplar of all things, according to which, before secular times, the totality of creation is read to have existed in the divine mind. Second, the world is called primitively exemplified, namely when, according to the exemplar of the archetype, the angel and the matter of this sensible world were created in the beginning. Third, it is described when this visible world is formed through various species and forms. Fourth, it is described according to how each thing is born from the seed of its kind, with temporal beauty continuously pursuing its course. Fifth, it is described according to how this visible world will be renewed at the end of time, transformed from its corruptible form into an incorruptible one.

The archetypal world is the Son of God Himself, one God with the Father and the Holy Spirit; this is the wisdom of God, and the reason and the Word co-eternal with God who speaks, of whom it is written: "That which was made, in Him was life," that is, it lived, just as an ark or a house preconceived lives in the mind of the artisan before it is made. Of the second, it is written: "He who lives forever created all things together." Of the third, it is written: "He who made the world from unformed or invisible matter," that is, invisible. Of the fourth, it is written: "The fashion of this world passes away." Of the fifth, it is written: "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

[Author] With God's help, we intend to proceed according to this order, and especially in the present volume, to diligently insist on the description of the

world according to the third mode, that is, on describing the various species that this sensible world contains. For we have sufficiently, I believe, already discussed the archetypal world elsewhere; namely, in the book we recently compiled on the Holy Trinity, commonly from the sayings of the saints and Catholic doctors. And in another short work, which we similarly published singularly on the Son of God Himself, the Redeemer of the world, which book we also pre-titled *Book of Grace*. Furthermore, we have fully digested the temporal beauty of the world from beginning to end in that work which we decided to call *The Historical Mirror*. Therefore, at the beginning of this volume, with God's help, we will briefly touch upon the archetype itself and also the secondary world, namely angels and primary matter initially exemplified. And afterward, having diligently described the variety of worldly species, we will finally concisely traverse some things concerning the temporal courses of the world and its end. Similarly, the holy doctors also say that the seraphim cover the hands and feet of the Lord because we cannot know what happened before the world and what will happen after the world. We contemplate only what is in between.

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## Chapter 2: On the Two Existing Worlds

[Author] Hermes, also known as Mercury and Trismegistus, to Asclepius: The Father of all, or the Lord, who is all things, willingly shows Himself to all—not where He is by place, nor what He is by quality, nor how great He is by quantity—but illuminating man by intelligence alone, so that, having dispelled the darkness of error from the mind and perceived the clarity of truth, man gradually mixes his whole being with divine intelligence. Liberated by love from the mortal part of nature, he receives the assurance of future immortality.

And truly, of all wonders, it surpasses admiration that man could discover the divine nature. For it is certain that the intelligible world—that is, which is known by the mind's intuition alone—is incorporeal, and nothing corporeal can be mixed with its nature that can be distinguished by quality, quantity, or numbers, for nothing of that kind exists within it. This sensible world, however, is the receptacle of all sensible species, including qualities or bodies, all of which cannot be vitalized without God. Indeed, God is all things, and all things are from Him, in Him, and through Him. And this sensible world, and all things in it, are woven from that higher world, as if a garment. For although in every genus of animals, individuals possess the form of their kind, yet in that same form, they are dissimilar in themselves, which that uniform God, as we have

said, brings about, whose species neither changes nor is converted. Thus, the forms of individual kinds are permanent, dissimilar in their own form.

The world, therefore, was prepared by God as a receptacle for all forms of species. Nature, moreover, He led through unique species, and the world through the four elements up to heaven, all things pleasing to God's sight. Heaven itself, however, is full of God; furthermore, all things from the lowest to the highest are connected to each other, and mortal things are joined to immortal, and sensible things to insensible. Plato also, as it is read, asserted two worlds: one intelligible, in which he said truth itself resided, and this sensible one, which is manifest to feel by sight and touch. And so, the former is true, and the latter is made in the image of the former, being merely probable. Therefore, concerning the intelligible world, when the soul knows itself, truth is, as it were, polished and made clear; but concerning this sensible world, in the minds of fools, not knowledge but opinion can be generated. He also said that ideas existed in the divine mind, defining an idea thus: "An idea is the eternal exemplar of things that are made." In this, however, he erred, in thinking that ideas were something other than the mind itself.

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### Chapter 3: That the Archetypal World Is the Son of God Himself

Basil in his book *Hexaemeron*, Chapter 10: Now, the most ancient ordering of creation was adapted to those essences which are outside the world, [suitable for virtues,] born without time, eternal and proper to themselves, in which God, the Creator of all, established certain works, that is, intelligible and eternal light, fitting for the blessedness of all who love God.

Augustine in his book *On the Trinity*, Chapter 6: It is a certain art of the omnipotent and wise God, full of all reason of living and unchanging things, and all things are one in Him, just as He is one from the one with whom He is also one.

Gloss on the Epistle to the Hebrews: This is the invisible world, which was in the wisdom of God, namely His eternal disposition itself, who disposed all things in His Word. Hence the Apostle says: "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." This means, according to the invisible exemplar that was in the divine mind, it proceeded into being from nothing.

Gloss on Job: For the craftsman first makes the ark in his mind, then in his work; that which is in the mind lives with the artisan, but that which is made changes

with time. Hence, concerning the Word of God, scripture declares: "Because what was made, in Him was life." For whatever was made in time, always lived and lives in the spiritual reason of the maker.

Augustine in his book *Eighty-Three Questions*: Indeed, God created all things with reason. Nor did He create man with the same reason as a horse, but He established each with its own proper reasons. These reasons, however, must not be thought to exist anywhere but in the Creator's own mind. For He did not look at anything placed outside Himself in order to establish what He was making according to it. The soul cannot contemplate these eternal reasons in the Word unless it possesses an eye of reason that is sound, pure, serene, holy, and similar to those it intends to see. For thus, being infused and illuminated by that intelligible light itself, when it adheres to it, it becomes most blessed by this very vision. These, moreover, whether called ideas or forms or reasons, are permitted to be named by many, and it is granted to few to see what is true.

Origen in his homily on the beginning of John: But if you ask how all things subsist in Him vitally, uniformly, and causally, take a paradigm from the nature of creatures. Observe how the causes of all things, which the sensible globosity of this world comprehends, simultaneously and uniformly subsist in this visible sun. For from it proceed the forms of all bodies. From it proceed the beauty of distant colors and other things that can be predicated of sensible nature. Consider the multiplicity and infinite power of seeds, how the numerosity of herbs, shrubs, and animals is simultaneously contained in individual seeds, how a beautiful variety of forms arises from them. Likewise, behold with your inner eyes how manifold rules in the art of the artisan are one and live in the mind of the one arranging them. How an infinite number of lines subsist as one in a single point, and contemplate such natural examples, from which, as if on the wings of theoretical philosophy, carried above all things, aided by divine grace, you will be able to clearly perceive the secrets of the Word with the keenness of your mind. And you will see how all things made through the Word live in Him.

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#### Chapter 4: What God Is

Dionysius in his book *On the Divine Names*: Hierarchy, indeed, is a secret good, super-rational to all reason, and incommunicable to any of the things that exist. Therefore, we must honor this secret with temporal silence.

John Damascene in Book 1: For to say what God is according to substance is impossible; it is easier to make a statement from the removal of all things. For He

is not anything of the things that are, not indeed as non-existent, but existing above all beings and above being itself. For if our cognitions are of the things that are, then that which is above cognition will entirely be above substance and vice versa.

Augustine in *The City of God*, Book 22: Certainly, Cicero, wishing to define God as best he could, said: "God is a certain mind, free and unconstrained, separated from all mortal concretion, knowing all things, moving all things, and endowed with eternal will itself."

Helinandus says that Empedocles is reported to have defined Him thus: "God is a sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere."

[Another philosopher also says] "God is an immortal mind, an incomprehensible height, a multiform shape, an unthinkable inquiry, an unsleeping eye, a light containing all things, good, and what is of this kind."

Dionysius, as above: What, I ask, is God? He is simple reason and truly existing truth, around which, as pure and unerring knowledge, divine faith is the unique foundation of believers, placing them with truth and truth with them. It is the unifying knowledge of the knowing and the known, restoring from evil, or rather establishing in good, ordering and adorning and perfecting integrity, and dissolving all blemishes. For this truth, the leaders of divine wisdom die daily, bearing witness.

Bernard of Clairvaux in his book *On Consideration*, Book 5: What, I ask, is God? As pertains to the universe, He is the end; as pertains to delight, salvation; as pertains to Himself, He alone knows. What is God? He is no less the punishment of the perverse than the glory of the humble. For God is a certain rational direction of equity, unchangeable and unswerving, indeed reaching everywhere, by which all wickedness must necessarily be confounded.

What is God? He is length, breadth, height, and depth.

- Length because of His unending eternity.
- Breadth because of His immeasurable charity.
- Height because of His unattainable majesty.
- Depth because of His inscrutable wisdom. The saints, according to the Apostles, comprehend this.

The same author, in a certain sermon, states: Those who, like Mary, are wholly devoted to God, diligently consider what God is in the world, what in human beings, what in angels, what in Himself, what in the wicked. Indeed, they

contemplate that He is the ruler and governor of the world, the liberator and helper of human beings, the savor and beauty of angels, in Himself the beginning and the end, and the terror and horror of the wicked.

Augustine in his *Soliloquies*: He is, finally, whom everything that can love, whether knowing or unknowing, loves. He is He who does not do evil and also acts to prevent the worst from happening. He is He from whose kingdom laws are also inscribed in these earthly kingdoms. By His laws, the free will of the soul is given, and rewards for the good and punishments for the evil are distributed by fixed necessities throughout all things. By His laws, standing for ages, the unstable motion of changeable things does not cease to be disturbed, and by the reins of revolving ages, it is always recalled to the likeness of stability.

Gregory Nazianzen: He is He whose entire and eternal being is an insurmountable, boundless ocean of substance. He is not encompassed by any limits or boundaries, transcending all sense and nature and all time.

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## Chapter 5: By What Properties Is God Distinguished?

Cassiodorus on the Psalms: God is an incorporeal, simple, and unchangeable substance.

John Damascene: That God is incorporeal is manifest to those who carefully observe. For how can that be a body which is infinite and indeterminate, and is not formed, but is impassible, invisible, and un compounded?

Augustine in *On Faith to Peter*: In this, however, He shows Himself to be no body, because He gave life to some bodies but not to others, though He Himself created all bodies. For only a living thing makes a living thing. But He Himself is naturally life, for if He were not life, He would not have made living bodies.

The same author in *On Seeing God*: Therefore, He is neither sought by bodily eyes, nor circumscribed by sight, nor held by touch, nor heard by speech, nor perceived by movement, nor seen in a place, but seen by a pure heart, and when thought to be absent, He is seen, and when present, He is not seen; hence the Apostle says: "So long have I been with you, and yet you have not known me."

The same author in *Confessions*, Book 10: He is not perceptible by any bodily sense. Yet there is a certain light, a certain voice, a certain fragrance, a certain food, a certain embrace of the inner person, where the soul shines, which no place contains; where it sounds, which no time snatches away; where it smells

sweet, which no breath scatters; where it tastes, which no gluttony diminishes; where it adheres, which no satiety tears away.

John Damascene: Furthermore, God is simple and uncompounded. For if He were compounded, how could He be impassible? For composition is the beginning of strife; strife, indeed, is discord; and discord, moreover, is the cause of dissolution. But dissolution is altogether alien to God. Moreover, how can God be compounded when He moves through all things and fills all things? Indeed, it is impossible for body to move through bodies without encountering and being encountered, folding and being opposed, just as whatever is moist mixes and confounds.

Boethius in *On the Trinity*: Finally, nothing is said to exist in matter, but according to its own form. Divine substance, however, is without matter, and therefore it is one and it is that which it is. The rest, moreover, are not what they are. For each has its being from those things from which it is, that is, from its parts, and it is this and this, that is, its parts jointly united, not this or this singularly. But that which is not from this and from this, but is only this, that truly is what it is.

Richard in *On the Trinity*, Book 2: Moreover, in that supreme wisdom which is God, there can be no falsehood, otherwise He would not be supremely wise, if He wished to deceive or could be deceived. It is therefore certain that God is truthful: and this very truthfulness is from truth. Truth, therefore, is not anything other than He Himself, since it can be truly convinced of having nothing but from itself that which nevertheless it has from truth. But truth, just as it never did not exist, so it will never not exist, for it was always true that what will be would be. And it was always true that what was, was. Therefore, God, like truth, had no beginning and will have no end.

Jerome in *Rules of Definitions*: Therefore, just as properties are assigned to natures—such as laughter to man, neighing to a horse—so, if anything is proper to the divine nature, you may assign it. It is proper to God not to have begun, though it is proper to all things that exist to have begun.

Richard, as above: That which lacks both a beginning and an end and all mutability is eternal. Therefore, in these three, He has proved to be eternal. He is also rightly called immense, whose magnitude is comprehended by no measure.

Hugh in *On the Sacraments*, Book 1: Therefore, He who is immense cannot be increased, nor can He who is one be diminished, nor can He who is everywhere



be changed in place, nor He who is eternal in time, nor He who is most wise in thought, nor He who is most good in effect.

From the Creed: And nothing can be accidental to Him, because simple divinity is always what it is, to whom, indeed, to be, to live, and to understand are one and the same.

Augustine in *On the Trinity*, Book 5: Let us, therefore, understand God, if we can, as much as we can: good without quality, great without quantity, creator without need, present without location, containing all things without form, doing wonders without any change in Himself and suffering nothing, whole everywhere without place, eternal without time. Whoever thus thinks of God, even if he cannot yet fully find out who He is, nevertheless piously guards, as much as he can, against feeling anything about Him that He is not.

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## Chapter 6: On the Unity of the Divine Essence

John Damascene: That there is only one God is expressed by scripture, saying: "The Lord your God is one God." For those not persuaded by divine scripture, it will be proven by disputation thus: God is perfect and indeficient, according to goodness, wisdom, and power. And if we say there are many gods, it is necessary to consider the differences among them. But if there is difference among them, where perfection fails in goodness, or in power, or in wisdom, then it is clear that it is not God. If, however, there is identity in all things, it is clearly one rather than many. Besides, how would the world be governed by many and not be dissolved and corrupted, considering the strife among governors? For difference introduces contrariety.

Richard, as above: Also, that which cannot exist, simply does not exist. Therefore, everything that subsists in the universe of things receives its being from the power of being. But if everything is from that, then it is the supreme essence. But if all power is from that, then it is supremely powerful; if all knowledge, then it is supremely wise. For it is impossible to give more than one receives or has. Therefore, the power of being is nothing other than the supreme substance. Thus, it could not give to any other substance, I will not say that it might have divinity, but that it might be divinity itself. Otherwise, what is impossible to be, would have an equal. Therefore, God is substantially one. The better and more perfect that which human thought attains, the closer it approaches to what God is, yet it does not reach it. Thus, to the learned, it is like a great proposition; to all in common, it is like a common conception of the mind to attribute to God

whatever human estimation reaches higher. However, it is impossible for there to be many omnipotent beings. For he who is truly omnipotent can easily cause any of the others to be able to do nothing. Otherwise, he will not be truly omnipotent.

Hugh in *On Three Days*: Furthermore, unity now precedes otherness, because it precedes the binary, which is the principle of otherness. Therefore, unity precedes all mutability. Since, then, every creature is subject to mutability, it follows that unity precedes all creation. Whatever exists is either eternal or created; therefore, unity is eternal. Moreover, eternal is nothing other than divinity, therefore unity is divinity, therefore God is one.

Dionysius in his book *On the Divine Names*: For hierarchy is the unity of all unity, a life-giving super-essential essence, an invisible and inscrutable intellect, so that those reaching its hidden multitude leave no trace as of a non-existent thing, yet it is an immutable good to none of the things that exist.

Hugh on the Hierarchy: Finally, that great theologian, namely Dionysius the Areopagite, says that the ray of divine clarity is never deserted by its own singular unity, although it excellently and beautifully comes to and multiplies for the anagogical and unifying temperament of the things provided. For this multiplication and variation of all things is beauty, because unless individual things were dissimilarly beautiful, the universe would not be supremely beautiful. Hence, it is said to proceed excellently and beautifully. Excellently, namely in all things, and beautifully in individual things: or excellently, according to the infusion of participation, beautifully, according to the disposition of the participants. For it is multiplied excellently, so that the good that is participated by many may be greater, and beautifully, so that the beauty of the universe may be greater, because it is infused differently to each participant. And this multiplication happens for the temperament of the things provided, that is, of the elect and those provided for life, so that, namely, they may be tempered among themselves and aided by the harmony of participation. And this harmony and peace is that temperament by which they agree among themselves to stand in one and be reformed to one, for this reason he calls it anagogical and unifying: unifying, indeed, that they may stand in one, anagogical, that they may be reformed to one. Therefore, it is beautiful in gathering, excellent in elevation. This ray therefore proceeds to illuminate hearts, whether from within by filling them with aspiration, or from without by infusing itself through the teaching of the sacred word. And yet, he says, it remains within itself in a unifying way, and although it offers itself to be participated in variously and multipliciously by minds to be illuminated, it never flows outside the simplicity of its unity.

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## Chapter 7: On the Trinity of Persons

Isidore in *Etymologies*, Book 7: God is called Trinity, as if "Three-unity," because the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are Trinity and Unity. For they are one because of the communion of majesty, and three because of the property of the persons.

From the *Definitions of Ecclesiastical Dogmas*: Thus, the Trinity is believed by us to be united without confusion, distinct without separation. For the Trinity is not confused into one person, as Sabellius asserted, nor is the divinity divided in nature, as Arius blasphemed.

Augustine in *On Faith to Peter*, Chapter 1: The Father, therefore, God, begotten by no God, but from His own nature, begat the Son without beginning, God co-equal to Himself and co-eternal with Him in the same divinity by which He Himself is naturally eternal.

The same author in *Solution to Heretical Questions*: For if the Father, in begetting, withheld from the Son the equality He could have given Him, He was envious; but if He could not give it, He was weak. But both are false, because the Son is equal to God the Father.

The same author against Maximus, Book 2: It is indeed more blessed to give than to receive, but this in this life is due to indigence, for certainly abundance is better. For it is better to have than to lack. It is better to give than to beg; but where he who gave, gave by begetting, and he who received, received by being born, indigence was not relieved, but abundance itself was generated. Nor can he who received be unequal to him who gave. For he received from him so that he might be equal. For he who says, "All things that the Father has are mine," possesses nothing less than the Father.

The same author to Orosius: Furthermore, concerning the Holy Spirit, certain faith asserts that He proceeds from the Father and the Son, just as the Son says: "When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father," and so forth.

Gloss on John: For from this He says, "whom I will send to you from the Father," and afterward adds, "who proceeds from the Father," He shows that not only the Father but also the Son sends Him, but this from the Father, from whom He Himself is.

Augustine in *The City of God*, Book 15: For this reason also the Holy Spirit is said to proceed principally from the Father, because He also proceeds from the Son, but the Father gave this to Him, because He begat Him in such a way that the common gift would also proceed from Him and the Holy Spirit would be the Spirit of both. For He did not give this to Him as already existing and not yet having it. But whatever He gave to the Only Begotten, He gave by begetting.

The same author in Book 7: He is the love of the Father and the Son, uniting both, and joining us. Hence it is written: "God is love."

The same author in Book 15: When it is said that Christ is the Son of paternal love, nothing else should be understood than that He is the beloved Son. For the love of the Father, which is in His ineffable simple nature, is nothing else than His substance, and therefore the Son of His love is no other than He who is begotten from His substance.

Richard in *On the Trinity*, Book 3: Certainly, where there is the fullness of all goodness, true and supreme charity cannot be lacking, for nothing is better than charity; therefore, love must extend to another for it to be charity. Where, then, the plurality of persons is absent, charity cannot exist at all. But if there were only one person in the Godhead, He could not possess supreme charity toward a created person, for His charity would be inordinate if He supremely loved someone who was not supremely lovable. Therefore, for the fullness of charity to have a place in that true Godhead, it was necessary for some divine person not to lack a worthy consort, and thus a divine communion. Indeed, in true charity, it seems paramount to desire the other to be loved as oneself. In mutual and fervent love, nothing is dearer, nothing more excellent, than to desire another to be equally loved by the one you supremely love and by whom you are supremely loved.

Thus, the proof of perfected charity is the wished-for communion of affection shown to itself. And it is a sign of great weakness not to be able to endure the sharing of love; to be able to endure it, however, is a sign of great perfection. But if it is great to be able to endure, it will be greater to receive gratefully, and greatest to seek out of desire. Let us, therefore, grant to the Most High what is preeminent: thus, the supremely beloved and the supremely lovable, both must, with equal desire, seek a co-beloved; and with equal harmony, possess according to their desire. You see that the consummation of charity requires a trinity of persons. Where, therefore, all that exists is perfect, just as neither complete charity nor true trinity can be absent.

Dionysius in *On the Divine Names*: The fountainhead of divinity, therefore, is the Father; the Son and the Spirit are the shoots of the generative divinity, germinated from Him, and as it were, flowers.

Hilary in *On the Trinity*, Book 2: There is, moreover, one God the Father, from whom is the soul; and one only-begotten Son, through whom are all things; and one Spirit of the Lord in all. Nor is anything found to be lacking in such perfection, within which is infinity in the eternal, species in the image, use in the gift.

Augustine in *On the Words of the Lord*: The Father is the truthful origin of truth for the Son, and the Son is truth sprung from the Father, truth, and the Holy Spirit is goodness poured forth from the good Father. But the divinity of all is not unequal, nor is their unity separable.

From the Creed: In the Father abides eternity, in the Son equality, in the Holy Spirit the connection of eternity and equality.

Augustine in *On the Trinity*, Book 7: Let God be thought of in such a way that there is neither confusion of persons nor such a distinction by which anything is unequal. If this is not grasped by the intellect, let it be held by faith, until He enlightens our hearts, He who said through the prophet: "Unless you believe, you will not understand."

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## Chapter 8: That All Things Were Created by the Same Supreme Trinity

Augustine in *On Faith to Peter*: Hence it must be held that every creature which is not God the Trinity was created from nothing by that Holy Trinity, which is one true and good God. And because He is supremely good, He gave all natures to be good, though not as good as the Creator Himself. For God the Trinity is the supreme, eternal, and immutable good, having no defect, because it was not made from nothing; having no progress, because it has no beginning. Natures made by Him, however, can progress because they began to exist. But they can also decline because they were made from nothing; their condition of origin leads them to defect, but the operation of the Creator leads them to progress.

In the first of the Trinity, which is God, natural eternity is recognized. Because He made some things in such a way that when they began to exist, they cannot at some point cease to exist. In Him, moreover, His omnipotence is understood, in

that He made every creature, visible and invisible, from nothing. In these, although the very diversity of things, yet much more His goodness and omnipotence are commended. For unless He were omnipotent, He would not have made the highest and lowest things with the same ease; and unless He were supremely good, He would not have provided for the governance of things, even the lowest.

Finally, the simplicity of God's manifold wisdom is commended, not only in the magnitude of sublime creatures, but also in the smallness of the weak, while all created good things are not only inferior and dissimilar to their Creator – inasmuch as they are not brought forth from Him, but made from nothing – but also are not equal among themselves, yet each remains as it began to be from God. Finally, unless He were naturally immutable, the order of His unchangeable counsel and disposition would never remain in changeable things.

The same author in *The City of God*, Book 2: Therefore, as already stated, this world itself, by its most orderly mutability and mobility, and by the most beautiful appearance of all visible things, silently proclaims, as it were, if one carefully attends, that it was made and could only have been made by God, who is ineffably and invisibly beautiful.

The same author in Book 5: It is, therefore, the omnipotent God who made man and permitted him, though sinning, neither to be unpunished nor to be left without mercy. He who gave being to the good and the not-good, seminal life to trees, sentient life to animals, intellectual life to angels; who left not only heaven and earth, nor only angel and man, but not even the internal organs of a tiny and contemptible creature, nor the feather of a bird, nor the blossom of a herb, nor the leaf of a tree, without the harmony of their parts and a certain peace, as it were.

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## Chapter 9: How the Creator Trinity Itself Is Insinuated at the Beginning of Genesis

The same author to Orosius: So that what has been said about the Holy Trinity, the creator of all things, may be approved by the testimonies of the Scriptures, this very Trinity is clearly shown at the very beginning of Genesis. For when it is said: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," what else do you think "beginning" refers to but the Son of God? Indeed, all things were made by the Father through Him. Hence, when asked by the Jews who He was, He answered about Himself: "The Beginning, who speak to you." Therefore, without a doubt,

the Father is to be understood in the name of God, and the Son in the name of the Beginning. Afterward, the Scripture proceeds to say that the Spirit of God was moving over the waters, who is the third person in the Trinity.

The same author in *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, Book 1: Just as the creating Trinity is hinted at in the beginning of creation, so too in its conversion and perfection, as the species of things are ordered. For both the Word and the Generator of the Word are expressed when God is said to have spoken for each kind of creature to come into being. That speaking is in the eternal Word, co-eternal with the Father, although the temporal creature was made when God spoke in the eternal Word. Hence, because the imperfection of the creature, tending towards nothingness through a certain formlessness, does not imitate the form of the Word, which is always and immutably coherent with the Father, therefore, when the formlessness of prime matter is hinted at, there is no mention of the Son inasmuch as He is the Word, but inasmuch as He is the Beginning: but afterward, in the conversion or formation of the creature, mention of Him is made inasmuch as He is the Word, so that, namely, through that which is the Beginning, the origin of the still imperfect creature existing from Him may be hinted at, and through that which is the Word, the perfection of the creature recalled to Him may be hinted at, so that it might be formed by adhering to the Creator and imitating His form according to its kind.

There is in God supreme benignity, coming not from need, but from beneficence, love in His works. Therefore, in the beginning of creation, it is said that the Spirit of God was moving over the waters, because whatever He had begun to form and perfect was subject to the good will of the Creator. Hence, it is also said of the perfected creature: "God saw that it was good," where the same holy goodness of God is expressed, in which whatever is perfect according to the measure of its nature pleases God. Indeed, there are two reasons why God loves His creature, namely that it may exist and that it may endure: therefore, that it might exist, the Spirit of God was moving over the waters; but that it might endure, God saw that it was good.

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## Chapter 10: How God's Invisible Attributes Are Known From the World's Creation

Peter Lombard: As the Apostle says, His invisible attributes are understood and perceived through the things that are made. This is because His eternity is understood from the perpetuity of creatures, His omnipotence from their magnitude, and His power or goodness from their governance. Moreover,

although power, wisdom, and goodness or clemency are predicated of God according to substance and are proven to be entirely one and the same in Him, yet all these are frequently attributed distinctly to the persons, namely, that power is attributed to the Father, wisdom to the Son, and goodness to the Holy Spirit.

Hugh in *On Three Days*: These, then, are the three invisible attributes of the Creator that are known through the things made by Him. Indeed, the immensity of creatures reveals His power. Their beauty reveals His wisdom. Their utility reveals His benignity.

The immensity of creatures consists in magnitude and multitude. Multitude is found in similars, in dissimilars, in diverse things, in mixed things. Magnitude is in mass and space. Mass is in substance and weight. Space is in width and length, depth and height.

The beauty of creatures is in their position, in their motion, in their appearance, in their quality. Position is in composition and order. Order is in property and time and place. Motion is fourfold: local, natural, animal, rational. Local motion is forward and backward, rightward and leftward, upward and downward, and around. Natural motion is in increase and decrease. Animal motion is in senses and appetites. Rational motion is in deeds and counsels. Appearance is visible form, discerned by the eye, such as the figures and colors of bodies. Quality is an internal property, perceived by specific senses, such as melody by hearing, sweetness by taste, fragrance by smell, smoothness by touch.

The utility of creatures consists in what is pleasing, suitable, convenient, and necessary. Pleasing is what delights. Suitable is what fits. Convenient is what benefits. Necessary is that without which something cannot exist. This sensible world is like a book written by the finger of God, that is, created by divine power, and each creature is like a figure.

The same author in *On the Sacraments*, Book 1: Since there are three in God—will, wisdom, and power—the primordial causes proceed from will, are directed by wisdom, and are produced by power. For will moves, wisdom disposes, power unfolds. These are the eternal foundations of all creatures, incomprehensible to every creature; for just as time does not equal the eternity of God nor place His immensity, so neither does sense equal His wisdom, nor virtue His goodness, nor work His power.

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## Chapter 11: How the Supreme Essence Is Known to Exist From the Consideration of Creatures

John Damascene: Therefore, according to John's saying, no one has ever seen God, yet He has not left us in utter ignorance of Himself, for the knowledge of God's existence is naturally implanted in everyone by Him. The very permanence, preservation, and governance of creation also teach us that there is a God who causes this universe to exist, contains and preserves it, and always provides for it. For how, indeed, could contrary natures—I speak of fire and water, air and earth—have come together in the perfection of a single world and remained indissoluble, unless some omnipotent power preserved them and always kept them indissoluble?

Moreover, what is it that moves the heavens? For everything that is moved is moved by something else. And that, in turn, by which it is moved, and so on to infinity, until we arrive at something immovable. For the first mover is immovable, which is God.

Augustine in *The City of God*, Book 2: Finally, as already stated, this world itself, by its most orderly mobility and mutability and by the most beautiful appearance of visible things, if one carefully attends, silently proclaims, as it were, that it was made and could only have been made by God, who is ineffably and invisibly beautiful.

Richard in *On the Trinity*, Book 1: Indeed, we incessantly see that in things which have not been from eternity, some succeed, others pass away. Moreover, clear reason finds that whatever has not been from eternity cannot exist of itself. Otherwise, it is plainly convinced that something gave itself the beginning of existence, at that instant when it had nothing, when it could do absolutely nothing. Hence, it is concluded by reasoning that there must be something that exists of itself. For if nothing had been of itself, it would not exist at all, from which those things could exist that do not have their being from themselves. It is therefore convinced, as stated, that something exists of itself, and by that very fact also from eternity; otherwise, there was a time when nothing existed, which the very experience of existing things proves to be false. Thus, indeed, no one can doubt that in such a multitude of existing things and such a manifold difference of degrees, there must be something supreme. Without doubt, moreover, rational nature is better than irrational; therefore, it is necessary that some rational substance is the supreme of all.

Gregory in *Morals*, Book 27: Thus, every human being, by the very fact that he is created rational, should infer from that very reason that God is He who created

him. Hence, through a certain wise man in the book of Job, it is said: "All men see Him," which, indeed, to see Him now is to contemplate His dominion by reasoning: and rightly is it immediately added there, "each one gazes from afar," for to gaze at Him from afar is not yet to discern Him by appearance, but still to merely ponder Him from the admiration of His works alone.

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## Chapter 12: How the Traces of the Trinity Shine in Every Creature

Augustine in *Eighty-Three Questions*: Moreover, everything that exists is one thing by which it is constituted, another by which it is distinguished, another by which it is harmonious. Therefore, every creature both exists, and is vastly different from that which is nothing, and is harmonious with itself in its parts. The cause of that creature must also be threefold: by which it exists, by which it is this, by which it is friendly to itself. Therefore, there must be a Trinity, than which reason can find nothing more excellent, more intelligent, or more blessed. For this reason also, where truth is sought, only three kinds of questions are proven to exist: namely, whether it exists, whether it is this or something else, whether it is to be proven or disproven.

The same author in *The City of God*, Book 2: Since, therefore, we are human beings created in the image of our Creator, whose is true eternity, eternal truth, and eternal and true charity – and that very Trinity is eternal, true, and beloved, neither confused nor separated – in those things below us, because they would in no way exist, or be contained in any form, or seek or maintain any order, unless they had been made by Him who is supremely wise and supremely good, we gather, as it were, certain traces of Him, some more, some less impressed, running through all the things He made with wondrous stability.

In ourselves, however, contemplating His image, like the younger son in the Gospel, we return to ourselves to rise and return to Him from whom we had departed by sinning. There, our being will not know death; there, our knowing will not know error; there, our willing will not know offense.

Indeed, among those things that exist in any way and are not what God is, from whom they were made, living things are preferred to non-living, and among living things, sentient to non-sentient, and among sentient things, intelligent to non-intelligent, and among intelligent things, immortal to mortal. But in rational natures, a certain weight of will and love is so powerful that, while by the order of nature angels are preferred to humans, by the law of justice good humans are preferred to evil angels.

And we, indeed, recognize in ourselves the image of that supreme Trinity, than which nothing in things made by God is nearer to Him in nature. For we exist, and we know that we exist, and we love our existence and our knowledge. Even irrational animals, which feel themselves to exist and for this reason flee destruction, show this by whatever gestures they can. But even plants and shrubs, which have no sensation, in order to send forth their germinating shoot into the air, fix their roots deeper into the earth to draw nourishment, and thus in some way preserve their being. Finally, bodies themselves, which have neither sensation nor seminal life, yet they either leap upwards or descend downwards or place themselves by balancing in the middle, so as to preserve their essence where they can exist according to nature.

But they also offer their forms to our senses, so that, because they cannot themselves make themselves known, they seem, as it were, to wish to be known. And we grasp them by bodily sense in such a way that we do not judge them by bodily sense. For we have another sense of the inner person, far more excellent than that, by which we perceive what is just and unjust—the just through intelligible form and the unjust through its privation. To the office of this sense, the sharpness of the pupil, the opening of the ear, the spiracles of the nostrils, the taste of the throat, no bodily touch approaches. There I am certain both that I exist and that I know this, and I love these things, and I am similarly certain that I love myself.

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## Chapter 13: On the Degrees of Creatures by Which Humans Ascend to the Knowledge of God

Augustine in *The City of God*, Book 12: Since, therefore, God is supremely that which He is, who says to Moses: "I am who I am," He gave being to the things He created, more to some, less to others, and thus ordered the natures of essences by degrees.

The same author in Book 5: To man, however, He gave being with stones, seminal life with trees, sentient life with animals, intellectual life with angels. For He gave to the flesh origin, beauty, health, and to the soul, in its rational memory, sense and appetite. To the rational soul, moreover, He gave mind, intelligence, and will.

The same author in Book 11: In all these things, however, as we have said, that are made by God, living things are preferred to non-living. And among living

things, sentient to non-sentient, and among sentient things, intelligent to non-intelligent. And among intelligent things, immortal to mortal.

Isidore in *On the Supreme Good*: Therefore, by certain degrees of intelligence, man progresses through creation to understand the Creator: namely, from the insensible to the sensible, from the sensible to the rational, rising from the rational to the Creator. Indeed, intelligibles praise God through themselves, but irrationals and insensibles praise Him not through themselves, but through us, while we, considering them, praise God. But they themselves also wish to praise God, because, namely, the same cause gives birth to their praise. Finally, the ancients said that nothing exists so dull that it does not have regard for God.

Augustine in *The City of God*, Book 11: But it is great and exceedingly rare, and granted to few, to transcend with the intention of the mind all corporeal and incorporeal creation, having found it mutable, and to arrive at the immutable substance of God, and there to learn from Him that all creation, which is not what He is, was made by none other than Him. For thus God speaks with man, not through any corporeal or corporally similar creature, but by truth itself, if one is capable of hearing with the mind, not the body.

The same author in *Confessions*, Book 2: Let him, therefore, hear You speaking within, O Lord, who can. Indeed, from Your oracle I will cry out confidently: "How magnified are Your works! You have made all things in wisdom." And this very wisdom of Yours is the Beginning, which speaks to us, teaching us inwardly, a stable truth, for indeed, even through changeable creation, when we are admonished, we are led to stable truth.

The same author in Book 5: Behold, O Lord, all Your creation does not cease nor is silent in Your praises, nor does the spirit of man, converted to You through these, nor animals nor corporeal things, through the mouth of those who consider them, so that our soul may rise to You from weariness, leaning on the things You have made and passing to You, who have wonderfully made them, and there is refreshment and true strength.

The same author in Book 10: Behold, I asked the earth about my God, and all things in it, and all confessed that they were not God. I asked the heaven and its luminaries, and these things that surround the doors of my flesh, I said to all: "Tell me something about my God, what you are not." All cried out with a loud voice, "Truly, we are not God, but He made us." My inquiry was my intention; their answer was their appearance.

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## Chapter 14: How Humans Have Known God in Many Ways

Hugh in *On the Sacraments*, Book 1: From the beginning, God tempered His knowledge by man, so that just as He could never be entirely comprehended as to what He is, so it could never be entirely unknown that He is. For if He were entirely manifest, faith would have no merit and infidelity no place; but if He were entirely hidden, faith would not be aided by knowledge, and infidelity would be excused by ignorance. Therefore, the hidden God was revealed and made known, partly by human reason, partly by divine revelation.

And human reason indeed apprehends God by a twofold investigation, namely partly within itself and partly from things outside itself. Similarly, divine revelation instructed human ignorance, sometimes from within by inspiration, and sometimes from without by the teaching of doctrine or confirmed it by the demonstration of miracles. And reason approved this and assented, and asserted that there is one God, neither a collection of diverse things, lest it create a multitude, nor a composition of parts, lest it form a mass, nor a likeness of many, lest superfluous plurality or imperfect singularity appear.

Thus, the invisible God proceeds to the knowledge of man in four ways: namely, inwardly by reason and inspiration, and outwardly by creation and doctrine. Reason and creation pertain to nature. Inspiration and doctrine pertain to grace.

From reason are things that are necessary, according to reason are things that are probable, above reason are things that are wonderful, against reason are things that are impossible. And the two extremes of what has been said do not at all admit faith. For what is from reason, since it is known, cannot be believed. But what is against reason, reason in no way assents to. Therefore, only those things that are according to reason and those that are above reason receive faith. And in the first category, faith is aided by reason, and reason is perfected by faith. But in those things that are above reason, faith is not aided by reason, but reason is admonished to venerate faith, which it cannot comprehend.

Dionysius in *On the Divine Names*: Therefore, we do not know God from His own nature, but from the ordination of all existing things established by Him, having certain images of His divine attributes, and by every way and order we must return to Him, by all abstraction and eminence in the cause of all things. Hence, God is known both in all things and without all things, and by knowledge and without knowledge, indeed, He is known according to and above all power of the mind, when the mind, receding from all existing things, then also abandoning itself, rests upon the apparent rays. Then, illuminated by the depth of inscrutable wisdom, which, as has been said, is to be known from all

things, for it is the maker of all things, always joining all things together and the indissoluble cause of all congruence and order, always connecting the ends of neighboring ages and making one conspiracy and beautiful harmony of the universe.

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## Chapter 15: How Philosophers Arrived at the Knowledge of One God

Richard in the prologue to *On the Trinity*: Let us consider, therefore, how much even the philosophers of this world labored in His knowledge and to what extent they perfected it. And let us be ashamed to be found inferior to them in this regard, for the love of truth ought to accomplish more in us than the love of vanity could in them. Moreover, we whom faith directs, hope draws, and charity impels, ought to be able to do more in these matters.

Augustine in *The City of God*, Book 8: Those indeed, the supreme philosophers, whom we rightly see preferred to others in fame and glory, understood that no body is God, and therefore, seeking Him, they transcended all bodies. They also saw that whatever is mutable is not supreme. And therefore, they transcended all mutable spirits, seeking the supreme good.

Then they considered that every form in any changeable thing, whatever it is, cannot exist except from Him who truly exists, because He exists immutably. And therefore, whether the body of the universe, its figures, qualities, and ordered motion, and the elements arranged from heaven to earth, and whatever is in them, or every life, whether that which nourishes and sustains, as in trees, or that which has this and senses, as in animals, or that which has this and understands, as in humans, or that which needs no nutritive sustenance, but nevertheless contains, senses, and understands, as in angels, cannot exist except from Him who simply exists. For what it is to Him to live, to understand, to be blessed, this is to Him also to exist. Because of this immutability and simplicity, they understood that He made all those things, and He Himself could be made by none.

For they considered that whatever exists is either body or life, and that life is something better than body, and that intelligible form is better than sensible body. For there is no corporeal beauty, whether in the state of the body, as shape, or in motion, as song, of which the mind does not judge; which it certainly could not do unless this form were better in itself, without the swelling of mass, without the noise of voice, without space of place or time, but even there, unless it were mutable, one would not judge sensible form better than another. For what

admits of greater or less undoubtedly exists as mutable. Hence, ingenious and learned men easily concluded that the primary form does not exist in these things where mutability is evident. Therefore, since both mind and body appeared more and less beautiful in their sight, but if they could lack all beauty, they would be nothing at all, they saw that there was something where the primary form was immutable and therefore incomparable, and there they most rightly believed to be the principle of things which was not made, from which all things were made. Thus, what is known of God, by His manifestation, they perceived when His invisible attributes were understood and seen by them through the things that are made.

The same author in Book 11: Hence, Apuleius the Platonist asserted that Plato thus preached of God, the creator of all things, that He alone cannot be comprehended even slightly by the poverty of human speech, but scarcely by wise men, when they have removed themselves as much as permissible from the body by the vigor of the mind, a glimmer of such understanding, and that too sometimes, like a swift flash of bright light gleaming in the deepest darkness.

From Lactantius's book *On False Religion*: All Sibyls are also found to have preached one God. Especially the Erythraean Sibyl, who is considered more famous and noble than the others.

Augustine against *Five Kinds of Enemies*: Indeed, the one called Erythraean said: "There is one God, omnipotent, sublimer beyond all the stars He made. Worship Him alone, who is the creator of the world. Those who honor the true God will inherit eternal life, dwelling forever in the most pleasant garden of paradise."

The same author in *The City of God*: Plotinus also, the philosopher, said that one must flee to the most glorious fatherland, and there all things will be open to you; what, then, is this class or flight, but to become like God?

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## Chapter 16: How They Approached the Distinction of Three Persons

The same author in Book 8: When the study of wisdom concerns itself with action in life and contemplation, Socrates is remembered to have excelled in active life, while Pythagoras is said to have pressed more for contemplative life. Therefore, Plato is praised for having perfected philosophy by joining both, which he distributed into three parts: namely, natural, rational, and moral. Perhaps, moreover, those who are praised for having understood and followed him more acutely and truthfully, perceived something about God such that in

Him is found the cause of subsisting, the reason for understanding, and the order of living. Of these three, one is understood to pertain to the natural, another to the rational, and the third to the moral. For if man is so created that, through that which excels in him, he may attain to that which excels all things, namely, the one true and supreme God, without whom no nature subsists, no doctrine instructs, no use benefits. Let Him be sought where all things are secure for us; let Him be perceived where all things are certain for us; let Him be loved where all things are right for us. If, therefore, Plato said that the wise man is an imitator, knower, and lover of this kind of God, by participation in whom one is blessed, what need is there to discuss others? None have approached us more closely than these.

The same author, Porphyry the Platonist, also states that the principles of things are God the Father and God the Son, whom he calls the paternal mind or paternal intellect. He also posited a third as a medium between these.

The same author against *Five Kinds of Enemies*: Moreover, Mercury, he says in the book *On the Perfect Word*, "the Son of the blessed God and of His good will, whose name cannot be uttered by human mouth, is the Lord of all from God alone; God loved Him, His only begotten, for He appeared good and most full of all good things, and rejoiced." The Erythraean Sibyl also says: "The Creator and Nourisher of all, who disposed the guiding spirit for all and made God the guide of all, God gave to faithful men to honor."

The same author in *The City of God*, Book 11: Indeed, as has been said, the aforementioned philosophers recognized a tripartite discipline of philosophy: namely, physics, logic, and ethics. And although in these three they are not believed to have thought anything about the Holy Trinity according to God, yet to Plato, who is said to have first discovered this division, God alone appeared to be the author of all natures, the giver of intelligence, and the inspirer of the love by which one lives well and blessedly.

Just as, however, different people hold different opinions when discussing the nature of things, the method of investigating truth, and the ultimate good to which all our actions should refer, nevertheless, their entire intention revolves around these three questions. Therefore, although there is a manifold discrepancy of opinions concerning what each one pursues in any of these, no one hesitates to believe that there is some cause of nature, a form of knowledge, and a supreme good of life. Also, in every human artisan, three things are observed for some work to be accomplished: namely, nature, doctrine, and use. Nature is judged by ingenuity; doctrine by knowledge; use by fruit.



From these, therefore, that tripartite discipline was found by philosophers for obtaining a blessed life. Natural for nature. Rational for doctrine. Moral for use. If, therefore, our nature were from us, we would certainly have begotten nature and wisdom. Nor would we care to perceive these things by learning from elsewhere, that is, from doctrine. Our love, too, proceeding from us and returning to us, would suffice for living well and would need no other good to enjoy. Now, however, because our nature has God as its author so that it may exist, we must undoubtedly have God as our teacher so that we may truly know wisdom, and as the most generous giver of intimate sweetness. For indeed, we recognize in ourselves the image of that supreme Trinity, not an equal one, yet one still to be perfected by reformation, so that it may be very close to it even in likeness.

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## Chapter 17: How They Failed in Distinguishing the Trinity

Gloss on the Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 1: Therefore, "what is known of God is manifest in them," namely, by the guidance of natural reason. For by "what is known of God," we mean what we can attain from the disposition of this world and by natural reason. And those noble philosophers, by questioning creatures in some way about the Creator, and with every species and disposition, as it were, responding with a voice, recognized the artisan from His art. Thus, they understood His invisible attributes through the things that are made, because they understood His eternity from the perpetuity of creatures, His omnipotence from their magnitude, and His power or goodness from their governance, and similar things.

However, some, in those words of the Apostle, wish the Father to be understood by "invisible attributes," the Son by "power," and the Holy Spirit by "divinity." But blessed Augustine says that the philosophers did not reach the knowledge of the third person, namely the Holy Spirit. He discusses this where he speaks of the third sign in which Pharaoh's magicians failed. For, he says, the magicians did not fail in the first or second sign, because the supreme philosophers of the Gentiles philosophized about the *agathon* (the supreme good), that is, the supreme Father, and about *gnosis* (knowledge), that is, His mind. But in the third sign, the magicians did not prevail, because the philosophers could not come to the third person.

Therefore, we say that they in no way had or could have had this distinction of the supreme Trinity, which Catholic faith professes, without the revelation of doctrine or internal inspiration. But God revealed power to them through works,

not through doctrine or inspiration. They therefore saw the truth from afar, but did not draw near through humility. Therefore, they are not said to have understood these persons because they understood them distinctly, truly, and properly, but because they knew that those three things, which are frequently, distinctly, and separately attributed to those three persons in sacred scripture—namely, power, wisdom, and goodness—exist in God. For power is indeed attributed to the Father, wisdom to the Son, and goodness to the Holy Spirit. Just as you understand the soul from the movements and administration of the body, though it is invisible, so they understood the Creator from the administration of the whole world and the governance of all creatures. Hence the Apostle calls them inexcusable, whom the truth did not escape, and in whom iniquity persevered.

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## Chapter 18: How They Also Erred Concerning the Origin of the World

Helinandus in *Chronicles*, Book 1: "In the beginning, therefore, God created heaven and earth." Here, Epicurus is convicted, who says the world was made by chance: for if chance made the world, why does it not sometimes make a house or something similar, which is less than making the world? Likewise, if chance made it, then some causes preceded the world, whose course created that chance. For chance is an unexpected event resulting from converging causes. Therefore, chance did not make the world, nor did nature, as other philosophers say. For it is characteristic of nature to flee contraries and seek similars. But the world was made from contrary elements. Therefore, the world was made not by nature or chance, but by some artisan. But who is that, if not God?

Also, things that are disposed are wisely disposed. Therefore, there is some wisdom by which all things are disposed. But that wisdom belongs to someone, and to whom but God? That wisdom also had power and will. For if it could not, how did it make such great and beautiful things? But if it made and willed, it did so either ignorantly or by compulsion; but what could compel such great power? And what could such great wisdom be ignorant of? Therefore, God possesses supreme power, optimal will, and supreme wisdom, by which He made the world.

Ambrose in *Hexaemeron*, Book 1: Plato and his disciples established three principles of all things: God, the exemplar, and matter. And they affirmed these to be uncorrupted, uncreated, and without beginning; and that God, tending toward the exemplar, that is, to it, made the world from matter uncorrupted. Aristotle also, with his followers, posited two principles: matter and form, and a

third with these, which he calls the operative principle: to whom it is competent to bring forth effectively whatever he thought fit to arise.

But what is so unfitting as to associate the eternity of the work with the eternity of God's omnipotence, or to say that the work itself is God? For some said the world itself was God, because they thought a divine mind dwelt within it. Others said its parts, and others both. Moses refutes all these errors by saying, "In the beginning," etc., comprehending in his mind the beginning of things, the author of the world, and creation.

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## Chapter 19: Why God Created the World as the Best and Unique

John Damascene: Since, therefore, God is good and super-good, He is not content with the contemplation of Himself, but from the superabundance of His goodness, He accepted that certain things should be generated for Him to benefit, and by His participative goodness, He brought all visible and invisible things from non-being to being and created them, and composed man, who consists of both visible and invisible elements.

Augustine on Genesis, Book 8: Indeed, God needs no good outside Himself, for He does not need the good He made. But with what goods would He not be laudably in need, if He had made no goods? He would not be good. And if He could not make good things, there would be no power. But if He could and did not, His envy would be great. Since, therefore, He exists as omnipotent and good, He made all things very good.

Ambrose: So that God Himself, who is invisible by nature, could be known by visible things, He made a work that would manifest the Maker by its own visibility.

Basil in *Hexaemeron*, Book 1: Blessed, therefore, is nature, and opulent goodness, most beloved by all rational beings and most blessed beauty, the beginning of all that exists, the fount of life, inaccessible wisdom; He Himself made the world in the beginning, as good, useful, as wise, best, as powerful, greatest.

Plato in *Timaeus*, Book 1: So that He might also be similar in number to the exemplar whose emulation He borrowed, therefore, neither two nor innumerable worlds, but one world was made by God. Moreover, the artisan gives form to the work, for forming the likeness and emulation of the work to an immortal example and one persisting in a dual state, it is necessary that He create an honorable image. He was best from the best, and indeed envy was far removed.

Therefore, He willed to make things similar to Himself, as far as each nature was capable of beatitude. For indeed, if anyone posits the will of God as the most certain origin of things, I would agree that he thinks rightly.

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## Chapter 20: Why He Made It Most Beautiful

[The same author in the same book, Chapter 12]: Nor was it permissible for outstanding goodness to make anything but what was beautiful.

Augustine in *The City of God*, Book 12: The beauty and utility of even this lower creation, which by divine bounty has been granted to man, though cast into these miseries, to behold and to partake of—with what words can it be circumscribed? In the manifold and varied beauty of heaven, earth, and sea; in such an abundance and wonderful appearance of light; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the shades of groves; in the colors and fragrances of flowers; in the diversity of chattering and colorful birds; in the manifold species of so many and such great living creatures, of which those that are smallest in mass are most admirable. For we are more astonished by the works of ants and bees than by the immense bodies of whales. In the very great spectacle of the sea itself, when it clothes itself in various colors, as it were. How delightfully, moreover, it is beheld, even when greatly disturbed. And thence comes greater sweetness, because it soothes the beholder, yet does not toss and shake the navigator.

The same author in *On True Religion*: So, all things are ordered by their functions and ends for the beauty of the universe, so that what we shudder at in part, greatly pleases if we consider it in the whole. For nothing is ordered that is not beautiful. These things, therefore, are infinite because they are perfected as wholes by imperfect parts. Whether perceived as beautiful in state or in motion, they must be considered as wholes if we wish to judge rightly.

The same author in the same book: Nor should one gaze fruitlessly and vainly at the beauty of the heavens, the order of the stars, the succession of seasons, in the contemplation of which, not idle curiosity is to be exercised, but a step towards eternal things is to be made.

Isidore in *On the Supreme Good*, Book 1: For from the beauty of circumscribed creation, God makes His own beauty, which cannot be circumscribed, to be understood, so that man may return to God by the very traces by which he is proven to have turned away, namely, that because he had withdrawn himself

from the form of the Creator through love of the beauty of creation, he may again return to the beauty of the Creator through the beauty of creation.

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## Chapter 21: On the Divine Art by Which God Fashioned All Things

Augustine in *On the Trinity*, Book 6: And it is a certain art of the omnipotent and wise God, full of all reason of living and unchanging things, and all things are one in it, just as it is one from the one with whom it is also one.

The same author in *The City of God*, Book 11: These are indeed, as has been said, the infinite treasures of intelligible things; in which are all the invisible and immutable reasons, even of invisible and immutable things, which were made through it.

Basil in *Hexaemeron*, Book 1: For the most ancient ordering of creation was adapted to those virtues which are outside the world, born without time, eternal and proper to themselves, in which God, the Creator of all, established certain works; this is intelligible and eternal light, fitting for the blessedness of all who love God.

Bernard Silvester in *Megacosmos*: Indeed, there was a fount of light, a seminary of life, a fullness of knowledge; this is what is called the divine mind. In it, in the image of living life, eternal notions—the intelligible world—the predefined knowledge of things, and a radiant splendor gleamed forth in inaccessible light, an image or countenance stamped with the image of the Father; this is the wisdom of God, begotten or nourished by the living founts of eternity.

Augustine in *Eighty Questions*: And this very art of the omnipotent, through which all things were made from nothing, this same art, I say, also operates through artisans, so that they may make beautiful and fitting things, although they work not from nothing, but from some material. For they themselves cannot fabricate anything from nothing, because they work through the body, yet they receive those very numbers and the congruity of lines which they impress on a body through a body, from that supreme wisdom itself in the soul; which wisdom, indeed, impressed those numbers and congruity far more artfully on the entire body of the world, which it fabricated from nothing. In it are also the bodies of animals, which are fabricated from something, that is, from the elements of the world, but far more powerfully and excellently than human artisans imitate the same figures and forms of bodies in their works. For not every numerosity of the human body is found in a statue. But whatever is found

from it, is nevertheless transmitted from that wisdom itself through the mind of the artisan, by which the human body itself is naturally fabricated. Yet they are not therefore to be considered great because they fabricate or love such works. For the soul, being intent on lesser things, which it performs corporeally through the body, adheres less to wisdom itself. Hence it has those powers which it uses badly, while it exercises them externally. Indeed, those things in which it exercises them, being fond of them, it neglects their inner form as if it were vile, and thus becomes emptier and weaker.

Hugh in *Didascalicon*, Book 1: Hence, such human works, which are not natural but imitate nature, are suitably called mechanical, that is, adulterine or spurious. For example, he who casts a statue has observed a human being, whose image he intends to express. He who first invented clothing considered that nascent things have certain proper defenses by which they protect their nature from harm, as bark covers a tree, feathers cover a bird, scales a fish, wool a sheep, hair clothes beasts, a shell encases a tortoise, ivory makes the elephant unafraid of javelins.

The same author in *On Three Days*: And human beings indeed frequently are accustomed to love their knowledge for the sake of the work, not the work for the sake of knowledge; but far be it from us to believe that God loves His wisdom for the sake of the works He made through it. Rather, He loves all His works only for its sake. For this reason He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," not "in the earth or in the heaven, not in the sun or moon," and so forth. For even if these things are pleasing in their own way, they cannot please except in Him and through Him. For they are worthy of my love all the more as they approach closer to His likeness.

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## Chapter 22: On the Reasons or Living Ideas in His Mind or Wisdom

Augustine in *Eighty Questions*: Those principal forms or reasons of things are called stable ideas, which are contained in the divine intellect and are not themselves formed, but according to them, whatever arises or perishes is formed. The soul cannot gaze upon these eternal reasons in the Word, unless it possesses an eye of reason that is sound, pure, serene, holy, and similar to those which it intends to see. For thus, permeated and enlightened by that intelligible light itself, when it coheres to it, it becomes most blessed by this very vision. These, however, whether ideas, or forms, or species, or reasons, may be called by many names, and it is granted to many to call them whatever they wish, but to few to see what is true.

Gloss on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Chapter 2: This is the invisible world, which was in the wisdom of God, namely, His own eternal disposition, by which He disposed all things in His Word. Hence the Apostle: "By faith," he says, "we understand that the ages were fitted by the word of God, so that from invisible things visible things might be made," that is, according to the invisible exemplar which was in the divine mind, they might proceed from nothing into existence.

Gloss on John: For just as a craftsman first makes an ark in his mind, and then in his work, that which is in the mind lives with the artisan, but that which is made changes with time. Hence, the scripture declares concerning the Word of God: "What was made, in Him was life." For whatever was made in time, always lived and lives in the spiritual reason of the maker.

Augustine, as above: Indeed, God created all things by reason, and not by the same reason did He create man as a horse, but He constituted each by its own proper reasons. But where should we suppose these reasons to be, if not in the very mind of the Creator? For He did not look upon anything placed outside Himself, in order to constitute what He was making according to it.

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## Chapter 23: How He Made All Things According to Those Reasons or Notions

The same author in *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, Book 1: First of all, then, let us remember that God does not operate as man or an angel operates, as if by temporal movements of His mind, but by the eternal, immutable, and stable reasons of His co-eternal Word, and by a certain, so to speak, co-eternal state of His Holy Spirit. For what is read in Greek and Latin about the Holy Spirit, that He "was moving over the waters," is understood in Syriac rather as "fostering". Not, indeed, as swellings or wounds in the body are soothed by cold water or by appropriate warmth, but as eggs are fostered by birds, where that warmth of the maternal body, by a certain affection of love proper to its kind, also aids in forming the chicks.

Therefore, when God said, "Let this be made" and "Let that be made," as the scripture relates in Genesis, it refers to the eternity of the Word, although the temporal creature was made when God spoke this in the eternal Word. For although words are of time, when and at some point, nevertheless, when something ought to be made, it is eternal in the word of God, and then it is made when it ought to have been made in that Word, in which there is no "when" and "at some point," because that whole Word is co-eternal with the Father. For when

the Father speaks, the Word which is the Son is said in the eternal mouth, yet when God speaks, the co-eternal Word is to be spoken in the mouth.

The same author in Book 2: Nor did God say "let this be made" or "let that be made" as often as it is repeated in Genesis; for the Father begat one Word, in which He spoke all things before they were made individually. But the speech of the writer, descending to the capacity of infants, while insinuating the kinds of creatures individually, refers to the eternal reason of each kind in the word of God, nor does He Himself repeat and say those repeated words: "And God said," and so forth.

The same author in Book 1: Of these things, therefore, which were created according to the reasons abiding in the Word of God, some also, having surpassed all temporal mutability, remain in the greatest holiness under God. Others, however, are formed according to their own temporal modes, while the beauty of the ages is woven together by the passing and succession of things. But it is very difficult and hard to grasp how it is said that God, not commanding temporally, nor the spiritual creature, which exceeds all times by the contemplation of truth, hearing temporally, but transmitting the reasons impressed intellectually upon itself by the immutable wisdom of God, as intelligible utterances, to those things below, so that temporal motions occur in temporal things, whether in being formed or in being administered.

The same author in Book 4: However, we should not think that things were constituted in the same way when they were first instituted as we now experience them according to natural movements, but according to the ineffable power of the wisdom of God, which reaches from end to end mightily and disposes all things sweetly. For it does not reach by degrees or arrive as if by steps; therefore, as easy and effective is its movement, so easily did God create all things.

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## Chapter 24: That God Made the World Without a Novelty of Will

Augustine in *The City of God*, Book 11: But what pleased the eternal God, that He should then make heaven and earth, which He had not made before? Those who say this, if they wish the world to be seen as eternal and therefore not made by God, are insane with the deadly disease of impiety and are too far removed from the truth. For, as we have already said above, apart from prophetic voices, the world itself, by its most orderly mutability and the most beautiful



appearance of all visible things, silently proclaims, as it were, that it was made by God, who is ineffably great and beautiful.

But those who confess that it was made by God, yet do not wish it to have a temporal beginning, but a beginning of its creation, so that it may have been made, in some scarcely intelligible way, always, I do not see how this reasoning can subsist in their minds. For if they contend that it is co-eternal with God, they will never be able to explain whence a new mass accrued to it, which had never been before in eternity. Furthermore, if they say it was created in time, but will never perish in any further time, just as a number has a beginning but no end, and therefore, having once experienced miseries, if it is delivered from them, it will never again be miserable—they will not doubt that this happens while the immutability of God's counsel remains. So, let them also believe that the world could have been made in time, and yet God did not, for that reason, change His eternal counsel and will in making it.

Indeed, the world is the greatest of all visible things; God is the greatest of all invisible things. But we know that the world exists, and we believe that God exists. And that God made the world, we believe none other than God Himself, who, speaking through the prophet, said: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." But was that prophet there when God made heaven and earth? By no means. But the wisdom of God, through whom all things were made, was there, which transfers itself into holy souls and constitutes friends of God and prophets, and inwardly instructs them by narrating its works without noise. And just as concerning visible things which we do not see, we believe those who have seen them, so concerning invisible things which are far from our inner sense, we must believe those who have learned these things, not by any corporeal light. Among these was that one prophet, so fit a witness, through whom God is to be believed, that by the same spirit by which he knew these things were revealed to him, he also predicted our future faith so long beforehand.

Isidore in *On the Supreme Good*, Book 1: But in the creation of the world, as has been said, no new will arose. For even if the world did not exist in reality, it was always present in eternal reason and counsel.

Hugh in *On the Sacraments*, Book 1: Therefore, the first cause of all things is the will of the Creator, which no preceding cause moved, because it is eternal, nor does any subsequent cause confirm it, because it is just of itself, and according to it, all that is just is just.

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## Chapter 25: That the World Was Made With Time and Not Before

Augustine, as above: To those who agree that God is the creator of the world, but nevertheless ask about time, why it was made then rather than before, we answer by similarly asking about place, why here rather than elsewhere. If they say that those are empty thoughts of men by which they imagine infinite places, since there is no place beyond the world, it is similarly answered to them that those are empty thoughts by which they imagine infinite times of God's past calling, since there is no time before the world.

For if eternity and time are distinguished—time, indeed, is not without some change, while in eternity there is no change—who would not see that times would not have existed unless a creature were made which changed something by some motion? From this motion and change, as one thing succeeds another which cannot exist simultaneously, time would follow in shorter or longer intervals of things moved. Therefore, since God is the creator and orderer of times, in whose eternity there is no change, I do not see how it can be said that He created the world after spaces of time. Therefore, the world was not made in time, but with time. For what is made in time is made both after some time and before some time: after the past and before the future.

The same author in *On the Trinity*, Book 5, at the end: God was Lord before time existed. And in time He began to be Lord, because the Lord of time began to be at some point, and time certainly did not begin to exist in time, because there was no time before time began.

The same author in *The City of God*, Book 12: Philosophers did not think they could or should resolve this question—why God created the world so late—otherwise than by introducing cycles of time, by which the nature of things would always be renewed and repeated, and thus they would assert that the cycles of coming and going ages would continue without cessation. Certain most false writings deceive them, which claim that many thousands of years have passed, whereas in the sacred writings, from the institution of man, we do not yet count six thousand years.

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## Chapter 26: That God Did Nothing Before He Made the World

The same author in *Confessions*, Book 2: How magnificent are Your works, O Lord! You have made all things in wisdom, and that is the beginning, and in that beginning, heaven and earth. Are they not indeed full of their own antiquity,

those who say to us: "What was God doing before He made heaven and earth?" For if He was idle, they ask, why not always so afterward? For if any new motion arose in God, and a new will to act arose in God, how then is there true eternity, where a will arises that was not? But if God's will was eternal for creation to exist, why is not creation eternal?

Those who say this do not yet understand, O Wisdom of God, light of minds, they do not yet understand how things are made that are made through You, and they try to understand eternal things, but their heart still flits about in the past and future motions of things, and it is still in vain. Who will hold it and fix it, so that it may stand for a little while and grasp a little of the splendor of ever-standing eternity, so that it may compare it with never-standing times, and see that it is incomparable, and see that long time is made only from many passing motions, which cannot be extended simultaneously; but nothing passes in the eternal, but all is present. But every past is driven by the future, and every future follows from the past, and every past and future is created by that which is always present and flows forth from it. To him, therefore, who asks "What was [God] doing?", etc., I do not answer that which some are reported to have humorously replied, evading the violence of the question: "He was preparing hells for those who inquired deeply." Hence, he who inquired deeply is ridiculed, and he who falsely answered is praised. But I boldly say, if by the name of heaven and earth is understood all creation, before God made heaven and earth, He was doing nothing.

But if anyone's fleeting sense wanders through images of past times, and wonders that You, O God, creating all things and holding all things, rested from such great work for innumerable ages before You made them; let him consider how falsely he wonders. For times could not pass before You made times, nor do You precede times by time, but by the sublimity of eternity, which always stands.

Jerome on Isaiah, Book 3: Therefore, the Seraphim cover the face, hands, and feet of the Lord, because we cannot know the past before the world or the future after the world, but we contemplate the present.

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## Chapter 27: How God Operates, Creates, and Makes

John Damascene, Book 1: It belongs to God alone to operate everywhere and according to the same [principle]; for He is everywhere above all things,

everywhere and according to the same [principle] He operates differently and by one simple operation.

Peter Lombard: To create properly means to make something out of nothing. To make, however, is not only to operate something out of nothing, but also out of matter. But God makes some things out of nothing and some things out of something. He is, therefore, Creator, Artificer, and Maker. But He has properly retained the first for Himself. The others, however, He has also communicated to creatures, for both man and angel can make some things, but not create.

When we say that God makes something, we do not understand that any motion is present in Him in operating, or any passion in laboring, as usually happens to us. But we signify some new effect of His eternal will, that is, that something newly exists by His eternal will. And this is said to act because its cause exists without His agitation; so that action properly cannot be said, since every action consists in motion. But in God there is no motion. Therefore, just as some things happen by the heat of the sun, yet with no change or motion in the sun itself or in its heat, so new things come into being from the will of God without any change in the agent.

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## Chapter 28: On the Creation of the Empyrean and of Unformed Matter

Strabo on Genesis: When it is said, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," heaven is not called the visible firmament, but the Empyrean, that is, the fiery or intellectual heaven, which is called fiery not from burning, but from splendor. This was immediately made and filled with angels.

John Damascene, Book 2: Heaven is the container of visible and invisible creatures. For within it, both the intellectual virtues of angels and all sensible things are enclosed and bounded.

Actor: They say, therefore, that this heaven is the corporeal native place of angels, where they were created above the firmament, enclosing the firmament on all sides within itself, not continuously or contiguously, but at a distance. For there are vaporous waters in between, which, according to some, are congealed into crystal, and are called the crystalline heaven, not the Empyrean. It was made of such great extent because many angels could not be in a very small place, but for wondering at and praising the immensity of the Creator with joy, as in the most spacious palace of the same supreme king.

Actor and Gloss on Genesis: By the name "earth" is signified the matter of the four elements, still confused and unformed, because, as Augustine says, earth among all elements is the least beautiful. Therefore, God created heaven and earth simultaneously, although man could not have spoken of both simultaneously. The fact that scripture varies declares the omnipotent God to be of such swiftness of operation that to will to make is to make.

From these, it is clear that there were four coeval primitive creatures: namely, time, the Empyrean heaven, angels, and the matter of the four elements, and these were created before any day